

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT ~ March 4, 2012



PHILIPPIANS: To Know Christ and Make Him Known

“The Advance of the Gospel” Philippians 1:12-30

We learned last week that Paul wrote Philippians from a Roman prison. He was awaiting trial before Caesar, and didn't know whether he would be freed or executed. Nevertheless, Paul chose to see his cup as half full instead of half empty.

We live in a culture that encourages us to avoid suffering at all cost. The gospel, however, enables us to see affliction as a potential good. This week's lesson will show us how that is possible.



KNOWING GOD

Read Philippians 1:12-30. What did Paul mean when he said to his friends in Philippi, “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain” (verse 21)? In what sense should the follower of Jesus look forward to his or her death?

How does the suffering of God’s people result in the advance of the gospel?

What other benefits of suffering can you think of?



GROWING TOGETHER

Paul says in vs. 21, “To live is Christ, and to die is gain.” Are you willing to risk everything, including your own life, for the cause of Christ? What’s holding you back from complete surrender?

Paul tells the Philippians not to be frightened or intimidated by their opponents, but to continue “striving together...for the faith of the gospel” (vs. 27). What cultural forces do you think pose the greatest threat to Christian unity and witness today?



SERVING OTHERS

Paul saw himself as a servant of others. He wanted to “depart and be with Christ” (vs. 23), but chose to “remain in the body” (vs. 24) for the sake of other believers. What are you doing to serve your church or community? Is there need to readjust your priorities so you are more of a blessing to others?

Pray for someone you know who is suffering. Ask God to help that person see his or her trial as a way “to advance the gospel” (vs. 12).



IN YOUR FAMILY...

Paul wrote Philippians from prison. He was “in chains for Christ” (vs. 13). Yet he didn’t let his circumstances steal either his joy or his resolve to serve God. What adverse circumstances is your family facing these days? Are those circumstances stealing your joy? Have you become self-absorbed instead of focused on blessing other people? As a family, discuss these issues and make some decisions so that suffering makes you better instead of bitter.

SERMON NOTES